

March 20, 2026

Investor Signposts: Week beginning March 23, 2026

Upcoming economic and financial market events

Australia

Monday March 23	◆ Purchasing Manufacturing Index (March)	<i>Composite PMI tipped at 54.7</i>
Wednesday March 25	◆ Consumer Price Index (CPI, February)	<i>3.9% YoY rise expected</i>

Overseas

Tuesday March 24	◆ US Purchasing Manufacturing Index (March)	<i>Composite PMI forecast of 50.5</i>
Tuesday March 24	◆ Europe Purchasing Manufacturing Index (March)	<i>Composite PMI of 52 expected</i>
Thursday March 26	◆ US initial jobless claims (weekly)	<i>215k tipped</i>
Thursday March 26	◆ Japan Core Consumer Price Index (CPI, February)	<i>1.3% YoY increase predicted</i>
Friday March 27	◆ Michigan consumer sentiment survey (March)	<i>55.5 expected</i>

Investors eye Middle East conflict ahead of Australian inflation figures and dividend payments

- **In Australia**, the key economic data point will be the Consumer Price Index on Wednesday. It is forecast to rise by 3.9% for the year to February, versus 3.8% in the previous month. It will be keenly watched given the recent RBA interest rate hike and expectations of another possible increase in May. However, the inflation figure will not reflect the recent outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East, which economists believe will lead to higher inflation in the months ahead.
- Looking at the winners and losers since the conflict broke out in late February; as of 19 March, energy names dominate the winners list, with Viva Energy (+37%), Karoon Energy (+30%), Santos (+19%), and Woodside (+19%) among the best performers. The biggest losers have been mining companies, with Northern Star (-37%), and Regis Resources (-33%) among the steepest decliners. Breaking it down by sector, energy is the only sector improving in March so far, up 15%, while defensive consumer staples and utilities have also outperformed. Materials (-17%), real estate (-10%), and healthcare (-9%), trail the pack. We will see if those trends continue in the coming weeks.
- There are a host of ASX companies trading ex-dividend this week, including Lycopodium, NRW Holdings, Cedar Wood Properties, Cash Converters (**Monday**); Cimtec, Fat Prophets Global Contrarian Fund (**Tuesday**); Flight Centre, Naos Emerging Opportunities, WCM Global Growth, Service Stream, Perenti (**Wednesday**); Salter Brothers Emerging Companies, Tourism Holdings, IPD Group (**Thursday**); and Vita Life Sciences (**Friday**).
- Dividend payments also start to ramp up over the course of this week, including ASX Ltd, Aussie Broadband (**Monday**); Deterra Royalties, BlueScope Steel, Challenger, Nick Scali, Tabcorp, IPH, Meridian Energy (**Tuesday**); Steadfast, Genesis Energy, Aurizon, GR Engineering Services, Santos, Contact Energy, Regal Partners (**Wednesday**); IDP Education, Netwealth, Newmont, The Lottery Corporation, LGI, GQG, Vulcan Steel, Liberty Financial, Peter Warren Automotive, Cuscal, Humm Group, Alcoa, Northern Star, Peet, Ramsay Health Care, EQT Holdings, BHP, Ingenia Communities, AGL, Helia, Lovisa (**Thursday**); EBOS, Woodside Energy, Telstra, Credit Corp, Monadelphous, Hansen Technologies, Breville, Origin Energy, WAM Income Maximiser, Beacon Lighting, and Argo Global Listed Infrastructure (**Friday**).
- **In the US**, it is a relatively quiet week on the economic front. The Purchasing Manufacturing Index (PMI) for March will be released on Tuesday, while initial jobless claims are out on Thursday, with 215,000 forecast.
- There are a handful of companies reporting earnings in the US: Cintas, Paychex (**Wednesday**); and Carnival Corp (**Friday**).

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